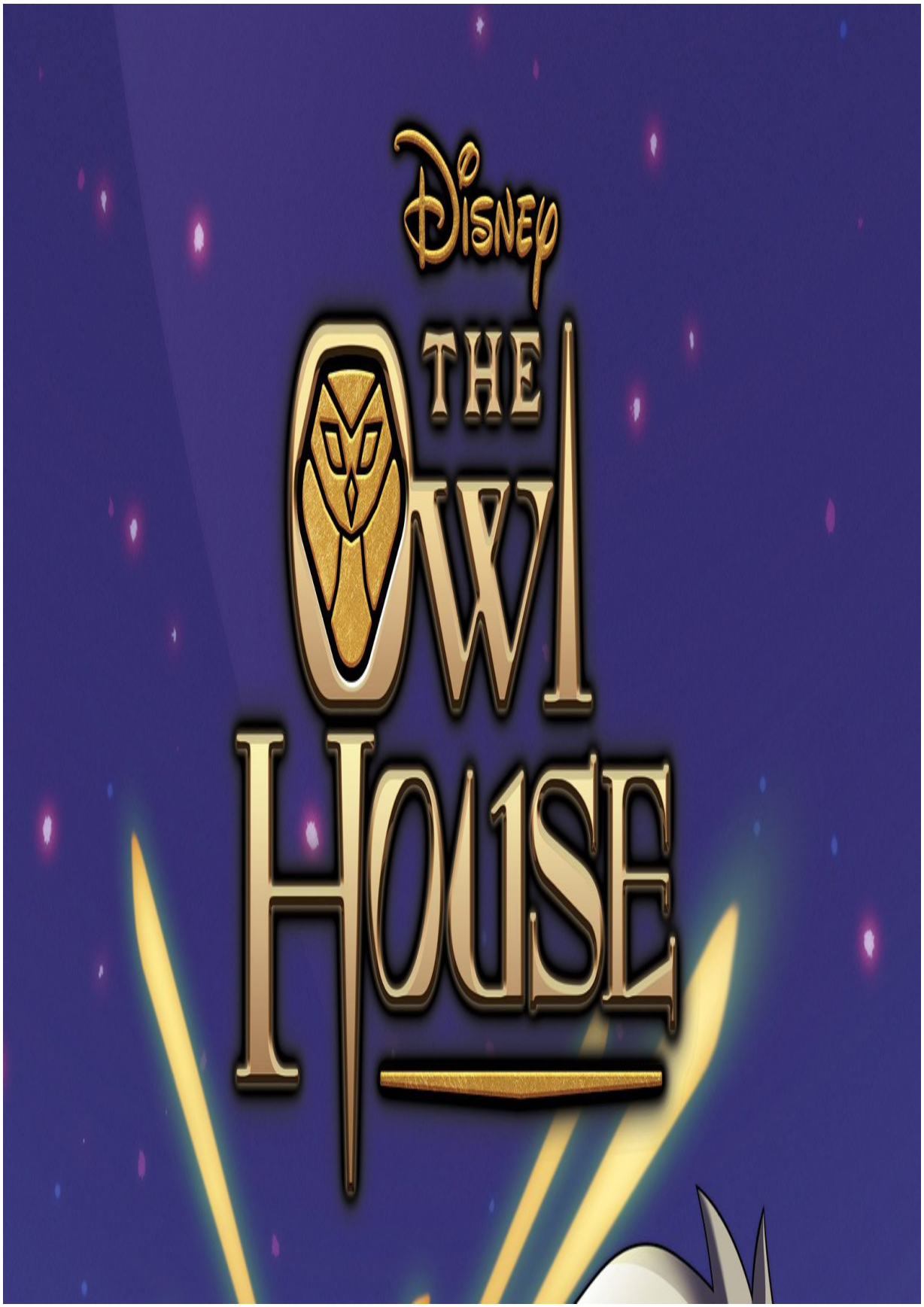
Disney
THE OWL HOUSE
Hex-cellent Tales from
THE BOILING ISLES


Disney
THE
OWL
HOUSE

Hex-cellent Tales from
THE BOILING ISLES

Hex-cellent Tales from THE BOILING ISLES

Adapted by **STEVE BEHLING**

Based on the episodes "I Was a Teenage Abomination" and "Adventures in the Elements"
by **JOHN BAILEY OWEN** and **DANA TERRACE**

Series created by **DANA TERRACE**

DISNEY PRESS

Los Angeles • New York

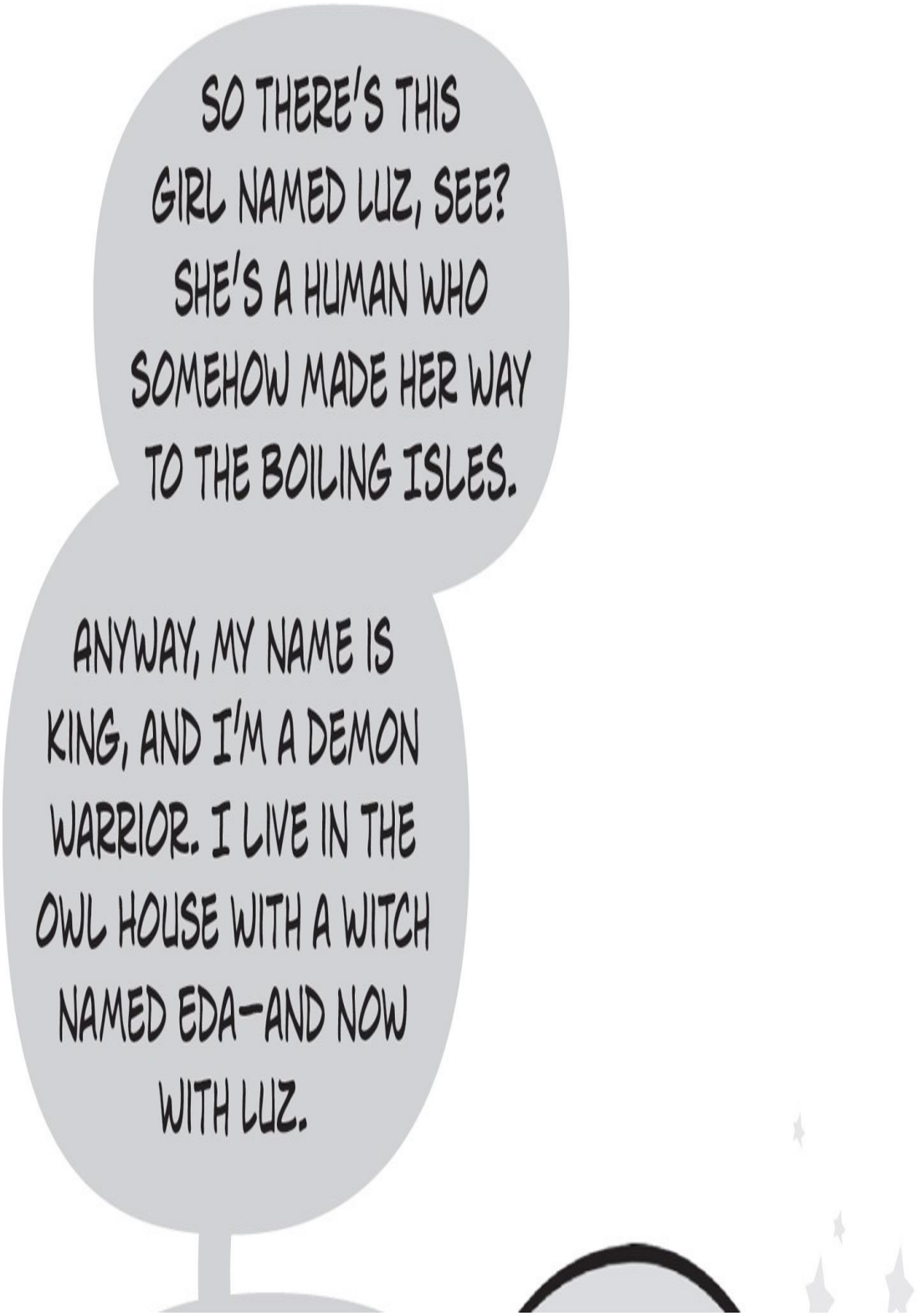
Copyright © 2021 Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. Published by Disney Press, an imprint of Buena Vista Books, Inc. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.
For information address Disney Press, 1200 Grand Central Avenue, Glendale, California 91201.

ISBN 978-1-368-07429-2

Visit www.disneybooks.com
Visit DisneyChannel.com

Contents

Title Page
Copyright
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11


SO THERE'S THIS GIRL NAMED LUZ, SEE? SHE'S A HUMAN WHO SOMEHOW MADE HER WAY TO THE BOILING ISLES.
ANYWAY, MY NAME IS KING, AND I'M A DEMON WARRIOR. I LIVE IN THE OWL HOUSE WITH A WITCH NAMED EDA—AND NOW WITH LUZ.

NOW READ THIS BOOK AND LEAVE ME ALONE!

CHAPTER 1

LUZ HELD HER nose, trying to keep out the stink of a rotting trash slug along with piles and piles of smelly trash. She had come to the Boiling Beach Dump with Eda and King to scavenge for junk. In the Boiling Isles, this place was kind of like a beach, but mostly it was a garbage dump. Eda thought the less-than-picturesque surroundings were breathtaking. Luz…not so much.

"I…don't…like this," Luz said.

Luz's lack of enthusiasm didn't dissuade Eda.

"It doesn't get much more inspiring than a trash slug," Eda said, pointing at the big trash slug carcass. "It makes a home, a life from what others have thrown by the wayside, until—*blam!*—it gets blasted by a wave one day and croaks from all the salt. Then we get to sell the stuff it ate!"

Eda handed a pickax to her young apprentice while King laid out his ducky beach towel. He had no intention of helping with the task at hand, but he joked with Luz that it wasn't every day you got to go to the dump and pick apart a garbage carcass.

"So, Eda," Luz said carefully, "what if we tried some new lessons for my apprenticeship? Like read ancient scrolls, or mix together potions, or —"

"Ugh," Eda said as she began rifling through the garbage. "Sounds like a bunch of magic-school stuff."

Luz perked up. "Wait, *is* there a magic school here? Like winding towers, cute uniforms, dark-plots-that-threaten-your-life kind of magic school?"

Eda nodded. "Mm-hmmm. What's worse, they force you to learn magic the 'proper' way. But magic isn't proper! It's wild and unpredictable! That's why it's so beautiful! I didn't finish school, and look at me! Who *wouldn't* envy where I am right now?"

Luz looked at Eda, who was standing in a pile of trash.

“Uh, hey—here’s a lesson!” Eda said. “A great witch is resourceful! Like *this*!”

Eda grasped Luz by the arm and stuck the apprentice’s hand into a pile of stinky garbage. Luz scrunched up her face and yanked out her arm only to see she was holding some kind of rock.

“Oh, hey,” Luz said, pretending to be excited. “Greasy slime ball.”

“Use your slime ball wisely, young witch,” Eda said. Then she turned to face the piles of garbage. “Back at it!”

But Luz didn’t want to be “back at it.” She felt queasy, and she started to back away. She asked Eda if it was okay for her to head home.

As she walked by King, she called out, “Love you, King! You li’l beach peach.”

King giggled as Luz rubbed his belly playfully.

* * *

On her way back to the Owl House, Luz stared at the weird rock in her hand. If magic was all about digging for slime balls, maybe she didn’t have the stomach for it.

“You can do it!” came a strange voice from nearby. “You *can*.”

Luz froze in her tracks. “Mysterious voice of encouragement?” she asked.

Pushing aside some shrubbery, Luz saw what appeared to be a little witch girl with big round glasses and pointy ears, sitting glumly beside a well-traveled path.

“You can do it!” the girl said. She got up and started to pace in front of some books and a large vat resting in a wheelbarrow.

“Even if you get a bad grade, it’s not a reflection of you as a witch,” she continued. “And my parents are right—there are better opportunities on this track. Now get to school!”

The witch girl looked down and saw that she’d accidentally stepped on a flower.

“Aw, little friend!” she exclaimed. “I’m sorry!”

Luz watched silently as the girl performed some kind of magic, and suddenly, the flattened flower glowed and returned to its natural, beautiful state. Luz was about to approach her when she saw another girl riding in on an enchanted wheelbarrow.

“Willow!” exclaimed the new girl, who sported cool mint-green hair and black nail polish. “Wow, you’re so unnoticeable I almost rolled into you!”

“Hi, Amity,” Willow said, frowning.

“Shouldn’t you get to class early to prep your—” Amity started.

Willow’s vat wobbled, then tipped over. Goo spilled out, along with a single eyeball.

“Oh, Willow,” Amity said. “You don’t have anything to show, do you?”

Embarrassed, Willow pulled her hood over her head.

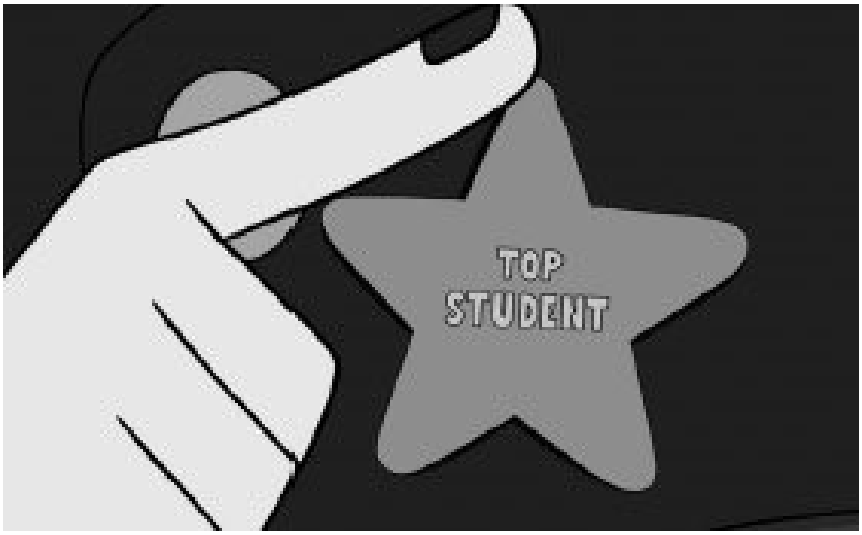
“This is why people call you Half-a-Witch Willow!” Amity said.

Then came a thump from Amity’s vat. “Looks like someone wants to say something to you,” she said. Amity removed the lid from her vat. “Abomination…rise!”

Slowly, a creature with slimy purple skin rose from the muck inside the vat.

“You’re…a…star,” the abomination croaked as it drew a little star with abomination goo on Willow’s forehead.

“Aw, it’s like mine,” Amity said, grinning, as she touched a star-shaped badge on her school uniform that said TOP STUDENT, “but much smaller and meaningless! As top student, it’s my duty to tell you to keep at it. Even *you* could get a passing grade someday!”



Willow just stood there as Amity said, “Abomination…cower!”

The abomination sank into the vat, and Amity closed the lid. “See you in class, superstar!” she said to Willow.

Amity walked off. Luz was so mad she stuck out her tongue at the mean girl.

“‘Ooh, see you in class, superstar!’” Willow said, mimicking Amity. “I *hate* it when she does that.” Willow wiped the star off her forehead and formed her hands into fists. “I hate making abominations. I hate getting bad grades! I can’t *stand* this anymore!”

The flower she had resurrected before began to glow once more, only this time with even more energy. Before Luz’s eyes, the flower changed into vines that sprouted from the ground and snaked all over the place. A vine raced past Luz and wrapped around her ankle. It picked her up in the air and dropped her right in front of Willow.

CHAPTER 2

“NOT A BAD haul,” Eda said, packing up her bag and tying it to her floating staff.

King sat on a nearby trash heap while Eda admired the glistening eggs inside her bag.

“Lose apprentice, gain garbage eggs,” King observed. “Fair trade!”

“Pfff,” Eda said dismissively. “I didn’t lose anything.”

“If you don’t teach Luz right, you *will*!” King said. “And that’s when *I* come in. Make her *my* apprentice!”

Eda laughed. “What would you teach? How to get stuck in the arm of a sweater?”

“Hey, that only happened once!” King said defensively. Then he collected himself and said, “I’d teach her about demons! How to identify

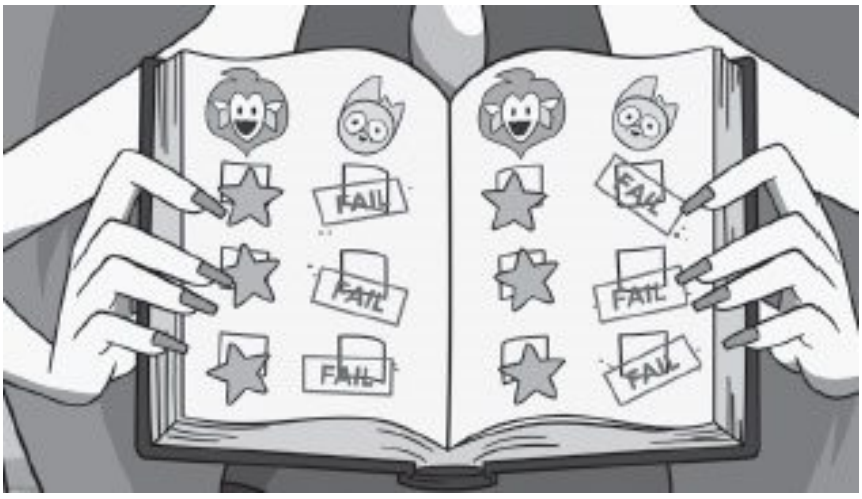
them…talk to them…raise an army with them and tear apart the world!”

Lifting an eyebrow, Eda said, “After they tear you outta the sweater arm, right?”

“You think you’re so smart!” King jumped off the trash heap. “Well, why don’t we make a little bet? Where I can *prove* that I’d make a better teacher.”

A little smile played on Eda’s lips as she pulled out a book she had stored in her hair. The cover said *Eda & King: One-Sided Wagers*.

She felt obligated to remind King that he’d never won any of their bets. She opened the book to two pages showing a chart. Each entry in King’s column on the chart had a bright red stamp that said FAIL.



“I like those odds,” King said.

Eda bent down to pick up one of the slimy garbage eggs that were still on the ground. “So how’s this?” Eda said. Inside the almost see-through egg, a larva wriggled and writhed. “Teach this trash slug to be your loyal soldier in one day—*prove* that you can be a better teacher than me—and Luz is all yours. But if you don’t, I change your name from King to Mr. Wiggles.”

King felt his competitive side awakening. “Well, when *you* lose, you’ll have to wear a shame hat!” he said. “And sleep in a shack and never come back into the Owl House again! Ha!”

Eda smiled. “Deal,” she said.

King slammed his paw into Eda’s book, making a mark next to Eda’s signature. Then she closed the book and threw the trash slug egg to King. He tried to catch it but couldn’t get a grip on the slimy thing. The egg cracked on his head, and the trash slug larva wriggled down his face and fell into his hands.

* * *

“Oh, no, no, no! I’m so sorry!” Willow said, untangling the vines that had wrapped around Luz’s legs.

“It’s okay,” Luz said. “The thorns only went through a few layers of skin.”

The two girls looked at each other for a moment, until Willow realized Luz was a human. “This is astounding! A human on the Boiling Isles! How’d you get here? What are you doing here?”

Willow’s questioning was interrupted by the sound of distant ringing bells. She looked sadly at Luz and said, “I’m sorry. I can’t stay. I have to

go disappoint my teacher. It was nice to meet you, human."

"Wait! I'm Luz. And you're Willow, right? What you did with that flower and those plants, it was—"

Luz couldn't find the words, so she just made an excited face and said, "Wow!"

"Thanks," Willow said, "but I'm not even supposed to be doing plant magic. My parents put me in the Abomination track at school."

"Ooooh! Like *magic* school?" Luz asked.

Willow nodded, and Luz practically lost her mind. "That's so cool! I'm so jealous! I have a teacher, but her lessons are a bit…untraditional. I bet she wouldn't even let me enroll. But I wish I could spend one day there."

"I wish I could get a passing grade for once," Willow replied. "Then people would stop calling me Half-a-Witch Willow."

Willow looked down at the puddle of goo and eyeball that passed for her abomination and gave it a little kick. Luz had an idea of how both she and Willow could get what they wanted. She stuck her hand in the puddle and slapped it on her chest. A little of the goo even splattered onto her chin.

"Make *me* your abomination!" Luz said. "I'll get you a good grade and you can get me into magic school! It's fiendishly clever!"

Willow stared at Luz like she was absolutely out of her mind.

"I saw that girl's thing," Luz continued. "It's just chunks of stuff that talks weird. I'm chunks of stuff! And I talk weird!"

“That’s true,” Willow agreed. Then she reached out her hand to shake Luz’s. “Okay, it’s a deal, Luz!”

“This is a great plan,” Luz said.

CHAPTER 3

A LITTLE WHILE later, Willow arrived at magic school. The main building was huge.

"Welcome to Hexside School of Magic and Demonics," Willow said, walking toward the front entrance as Luz peeked over the edge of the abomination vat. "Remember to stay hidden, okay?" Willow added quietly.

Inside the school, Willow headed to her locker-monster. She tickled it, and the monster opened its mouth. The creature unfurled its tongue, revealing her books. Willow took one.

Suddenly, someone bumped into Willow. She turned around to see a fellow student with his head stuck inside a magazine called *TWEEN BO$$*. It was from the human world!

“Willow, you would not believe humans!” he said, looking at the magazine.

“Humans?” Willow said quickly. “I haven’t seen any. What?!”

But the boy didn’t pay any attention. Instead, he shoved a page of the magazine, featuring a kid grinning with a mouthful of metal braces, in Willow’s face.

“Did you know that humans nail barbed wire to their kids’ teeth?” he said. “But why? Maybe to make them magnetic!”

“Actually, it’s for storing treats!” Luz said inside the vat.

Willow tried to keep the lid on the vat, but the boy was already giving her the eye.

“Okay, Augustus,” Willow said, “I’m gonna tell you something. But you have to be cool.”

“I can be shpool!” Augustus replied. “I mean, cool!”

“Okay,” Willow said. “Abomination…rise.”

A moment later, the lid came off the vat, and Luz rose, covered in the abomination goo. It was all over her body and caked in her hair, making her look monstrous.

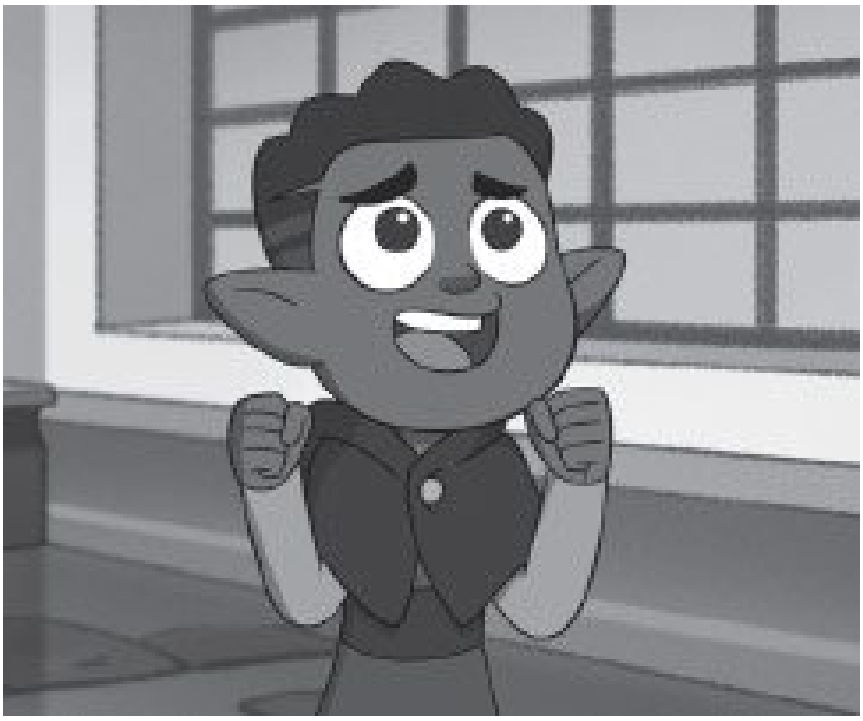
“Ta-da!” Luz announced. “I’m an abomination!”

“Luz, that’s *not* how abominations act!” Willow said.

Augustus stared at Luz for a moment, studying her. His eyes slowly widened. “No. No, it couldn’t be.”

“He’s the president of the Human Appreciation Society,” Willow said to Luz. “Most witches wouldn’t be able to recognize a human right away. But Augustus is an expert!”

“Where are your gills?” Augustus asked.



Luz told Augustus that she knew a boy with his name back in the human world. “We called him Gus,” she said.

Augustus’s eyes lit up. He was thrilled that he now had a human nickname. “Wow! Gus!” he said. “This is the best day of my life.”

Suddenly, the school bell screamed.

“I’ve got to get to spelling class,” Gus said. “See you guys at lunch!”

“All right,” Willow said, looking at Luz, “into the darkness you go.”

Luz hissed as she sank into the abomination vat.

* * *

The trash slug, which King had named Prince Jr., writhed along the ground outside the Owl House. King gave it a dog biscuit. Eda sat nearby in a lawn chair, sipping a drink and smiling.

“Hey, Mr. Wiggles!” Eda called. “You’re not gonna teach it anything doin’ that!”

“It’s called positive reinforcement, Eda,” King sniffed. “And it works wonders!”

The trash slug chowed down on the biscuit and got larger.

“Haha! See?” King said, pointing at the trash slug. “Now watch *this*! Prince Jr., attack Eda! Knock over her drink! Mess up her hair!”

King anxiously awaited Prince Jr.’s attack—an attack that never came. The trash slug seemed interested only in looking at another dog biscuit King held in his hand.

“Oh, no,” Eda said. “Please stop.”

“Well, I haven’t seen *your* student in forever,” King retorted. “For all we know, she’s not even loyal to you anymore!”

As Prince Jr. nibbled at King’s hand, trying to get at the dog biscuit, Eda chuckled. “You wish!” she said, but then a look of concern crossed her face. “But yeah, where *is* she?”

* * *

Willow had just taken her seat in the Abomination 101 classroom as class began.

The teacher stood at the front of the class, looking at one student’s abomination.

“Too many toenails in unexpected places,” the teacher proclaimed. “Fail!”

The student walked back to her seat, crestfallen.

“Pathetic!” the teacher hollered. “The biggest abominations are all of *you*! If the next abomination is a failure, everyone gets extra homework for a *month*!”

At once, the class was abuzz with worry.

“And the next one to come up is—” the teacher began.

“Excuse me, sir,” Amity interrupted, “but I am ready to present my abomination. Rise!”

Amity’s abomination erupted from the vat. The teacher giggled. “I’ve always saved the best for last, Amity. You’ll have to wait your turn!”

Amity basked in the praise as the teacher slowly turned his head. He looked at Willow and asked her to share her project.

The groaning started in earnest, and students murmured, “Not Half-a-Witch!” and “Great homework for a month!”

Luz peeked out from the vat. “Don’t listen to them, Willow!” she whispered. “We can do this!”

Nervously, Willow rolled the abomination vat to the front of the classroom.

She took a deep breath and stuttered, “A-a-abomination…r-rise!”

Luz jumped from the vat in all her creepy, gooey glory. The class gasped!

“Abomination…bow!” Willow commanded, and Luz delivered a bow worthy of any stage actor.

“Very impressive,” the teacher said. “But does it *speak*?”

“Uh, I may be your abomination, but you’re my aMOMination,” Luz said to Willow.

The classroom filled with cries of *“Awwwww!”*

“‘AMOMination,’” the teacher said, laughing. “Splendid wordplay! A-plus!” The teacher wrote a big *A+* on Luz’s forehead.

The class broke into applause. *Everyone* seemed to love Willow’s abomination!

Everyone except Amity, who looked suspicious.

CHAPTER 4

THE BELL SCREAMED. Willow was wheeling her vat down the school hallway when the teacher called after her.

"Wonderful work today, Willow," the teacher said. "Looks like we have a new top student!"

As Amity exited the classroom, the teacher reached out and removed her TOP STUDENT badge. She could scarcely believe it when he pinned it on Willow.

"Th-thank you, sir!" Willow said.

"Hey," Amity said to Willow as the teacher walked away, "last time I saw you, your abomination was mush. What did you do?"

Thinking fast, Willow told Amity that she had taken her pep talk to heart.

But Amity wasn't buying it. She lowered her eyebrows at Willow and said, "I bet you did. I've got my eyes on you, Half-a-Witch. That badge is *mine*."

Amity stormed off as Willow put her hand to her cheek. "Uh-oh, I think Amity is on to us," she said softly.

* * *

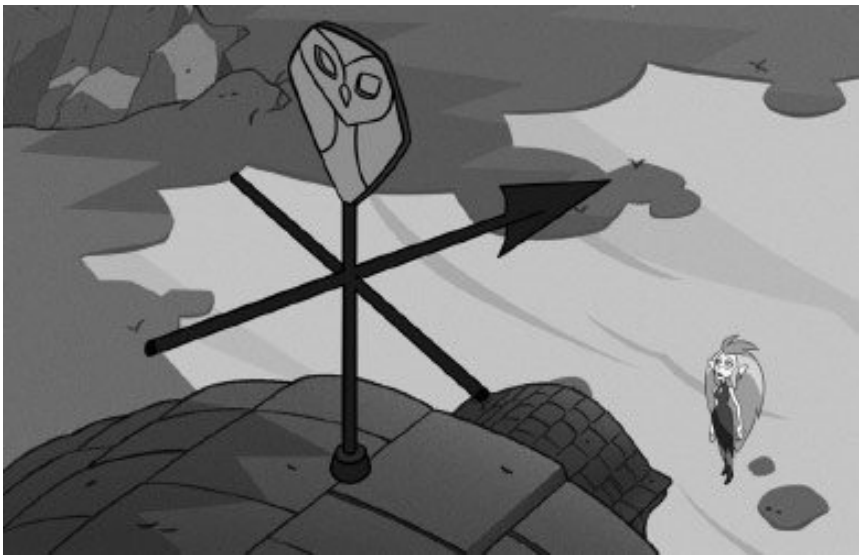
"Have you seen Luz?" Eda demanded as she pushed open the front door and Hooty, the strange owl embedded in it, smacked his forehead into the side of the Owl House.

"I heard her tiny mouse feet walking close by," Hooty said. "Or that might have been some mice. Anyway, someone started moving in *that* direction."

Eda stared at Hooty, then said, "Are you trying to point, or…?"

"Look at the weather vane!" Hooty shouted.

Eda looked up at the weather vane atop the Owl House and watched as it pointed in a particular direction.



"But the only thing that way is…No!" Eda said with a gasp, and then ran toward the forest.

In no time, Eda ran down a path leading to a school. As she passed by the classroom windows, she heard the teachers bombarding their students with all sorts of useless information, like the study of runes and the heximal system.

“Pointless busywork,” Eda muttered. She hoped that Luz wasn’t inside, wasting her time.

But to her horror, Eda saw Luz sitting in the next classroom.

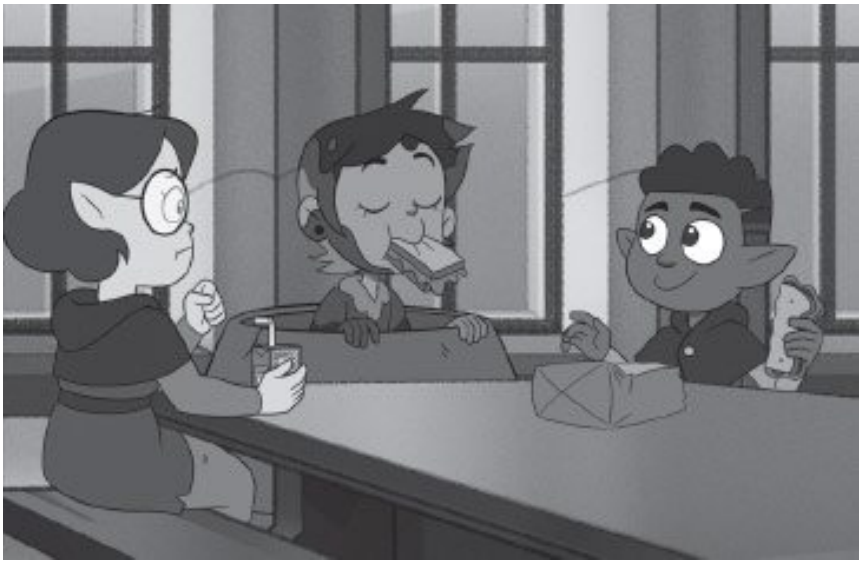
“Nooooo!” Eda cried.

* * *

Gus and Willow sat at their table in the cafeteria, the abomination vat beside them.

“Do humans eat PB&Js?” Gus asked.

“Oh my gosh, I haven’t eaten real food in so long. Please give me some!” Luz sputtered.



Gus happily split his sandwich in two and handed half to Luz inside the vat.

Willow warned them to be careful so Amity wouldn't see.

As if on cue, Amity jumped onto their table and shouted, "I saw that! Abominations don't eat!" She yelled into the vat. "I know you're in there! You can't hide from me! What are you? *Who* are you? I want answers!"

Amity pulled Luz from the vat and shook her. Suddenly, the Abomination teacher walked into the cafeteria and said, "Amity Blight! I suspected a twinge of jealousy, but *this*…this is just sad."

"But I—No! Look at it!" Amity said, holding Luz by her shirt collar.

But Luz was standing there in the vat, looking all abomination-y, moaning.

"Report to Principal Bump's office," the Abomination teacher ordered.

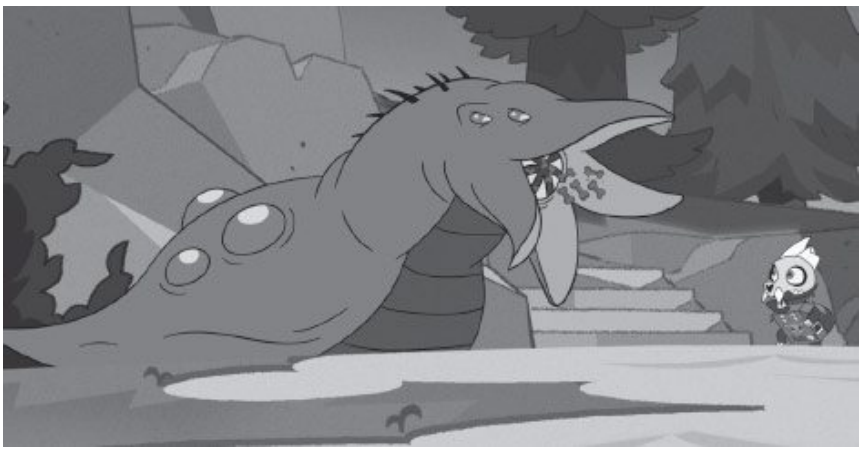
"But—"

"Now!" the teacher thundered.

Amity ran off with a scowl on her face as Luz and Willow looked on, worried.

CHAPTER 5

“SO, DID YOU find your runaway student?” King asked as Eda emerged from the forest. He was still busy training Prince Jr., or at least trying to. But King’s idea of training amounted to tossing dog biscuit after dog biscuit to the creature, who had now grown to twice Eda’s height.



When Eda only glared at King, he said, “By your expression, I can tell Luz has gone and found herself someplace else to learn—which means I have won!”

“Yes, great, you won,” Eda said emotionlessly. “You have a giant soldier-thing and I have nothing. Congrats.”

“Oh, Eda, don’t say that,” King replied. “At least you have *this*!”

King handed her a conical hat that said *SHAME* on it, and laughed.

Eda grabbed the hat, stormed off to a shack attached to the Owl House, and slammed the door.

“I am so funny!” King announced. “Well, Prince Jr., training complete. Go forth! Make the world tremble at your feet—er, worm stubs!”

Unsurprisingly, Prince Jr. didn’t so much as move.

“Go forth?” King asked.

Prince Jr. still did nothing.

King shook his box of dog biscuits. But there was nothing left.

Prince Jr. started to growl.

* * *

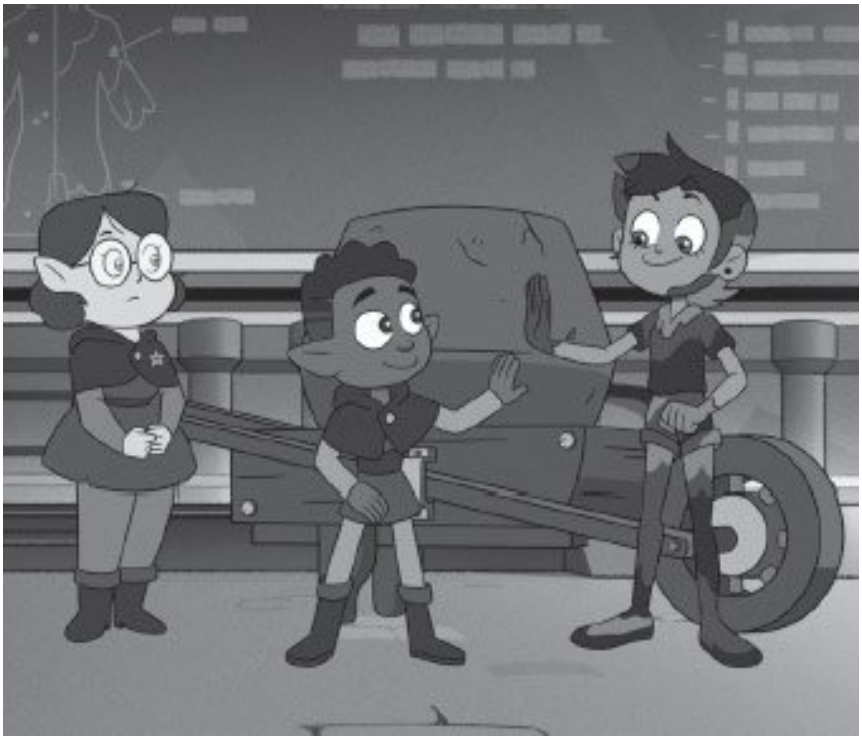
After lunch, Willow, Gus, and Luz went to the Abomination 101 classroom. The top of the vat came off, and Luz emerged, stretching.

“Whoo, I’m a sweaty little abomination!” she said. “But now we don’t have to worry about Amity! High-five!”

Luz held up a hand, palm outward, but Gus and Willow just stared at her.

“Slap my hand,” Luz instructed. “It’s a human thing.”

“Oh!” Gus said as he struck Luz’s hand over and over again. “Oh my, oh man, what a rush!”



Suddenly, the classroom door swung open. Amity stood in the doorway, smiling, with Principal Bump behind her.

“Good afternoon, students,” the principal said.

“Principal Bump!” Willow exclaimed. Luz quickly went into her abomination routine and fell to the floor.

The principal walked toward Luz and grabbed her jaw, moving her head around. He stared at Luz, then took a step back. “Abomination… rise,” he ordered.

On command, Luz stood up.

“Abomination,” the principal said, “lie.”

Thinking fast, Luz said, “Uh, viral fame is a worthy pursuit. Your cat would never eat you if it got the chance. Chemtrails are—”

The principal broke out laughing. “Oh, no, Abomination. How strange for it to get the command wrong. I mean lie *down*.” He pointed toward a table.

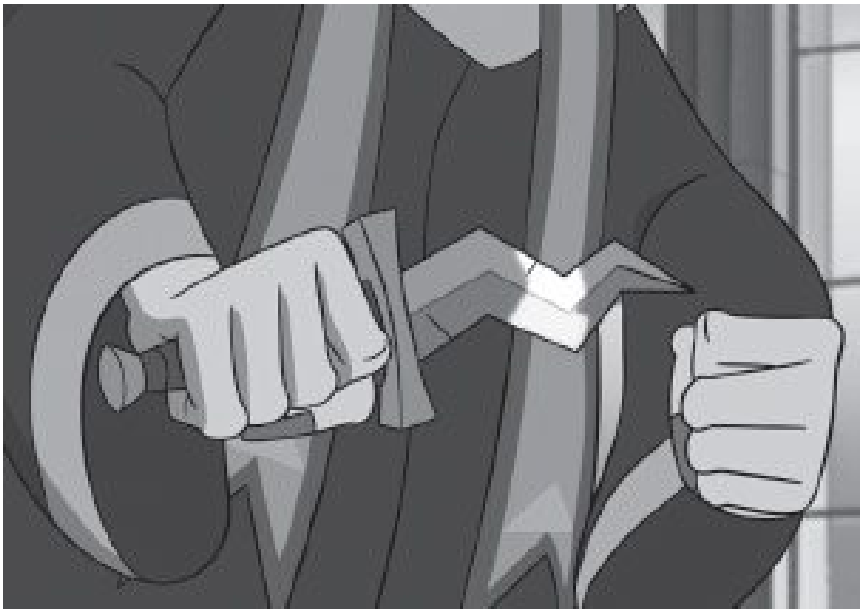
Luz grunted, then shambled toward the table and lay down.

“So very lifelike,” Principal Bump said to Willow. “When Ms. Blight told me about your abomination, I had to come by, see what she’s made of.”

“Oh! I-I have her list of ingredients right here!” Willow said, digging into her pocket.

“No,” the principal replied as he pulled out something gleaming.

A knife.



“We were hoping for a *closer* look,” he said. Then he handed the knife to Willow as Amity smirked. “Willow, I’ll allow you the first cut.”

A panicked Willow leaned in to Luz, whispering, “You can’t just cut open a human, can you?”

Luz’s eyes were huge as she shook her head.

Then Gus shouted, “Wait! Principal Bump!”

Everyone turned to look at Gus, who stood by the abomination vats. Then he said, “High-five!” and knocked a vat over. It smashed into another vat, and that one smashed into another, and all the vats tumbled to the ground, one after the other.

In seconds, the floor was covered in abominations and goo—so, so much goo.

“Run!” Gus shouted, and Willow and Luz sprinted from the classroom.

Pointing toward the door, Amity shouted, “They’re getting away!”

“No,” Principal Bump said. “The intruder won’t get far.” Then he drew a spell circle on the classroom wall. Mystical energy formed inside the circle and seeped out into the wall itself.

* * *

“This is all my fault, Willow,” Luz said, panting. “I just wanted to see what a *real* magic school was like!”

“Well, how do you like it?” Willow asked as they hid in an archway.

“It’s lovely, actually,” Luz replied, and the two friends smiled at each other.

“Okay,” Willow said, “we should get out of here before—”

Without warning, the school’s walls began to glow red with etched magic glyphs, and the archways down the halls were blocked by eerie magical shields.

“—Bump seals us in.”

CHAPTER 6

EDA WAS SITTING alone in the shack, wearing her shame hat, when King burst through the door. “Help me, help me, help me!” he cried, then jumped into Eda’s arms.

She had no idea what to make of it until Prince Jr. smashed against the shack.

“Trouble with your student?” she asked.

“Yes,” King said. “Yes!”

Smash!

The giant trash slug slammed against the shack once more.

“Are you sure you need my help?” Eda asked. “Maybe he only wants more of your brilliant lessons.”

Crash!

At last Prince Jr. had breached the door of the shack, and he grabbed King’s tail and pulled him.

“Please, help me!” King begged. “You can call me Mr. Wiggles!”

Without missing a beat, Eda poked the top of Prince Jr.’s mouth with her staff. The giant trash slug released its hold on King and slunk outside.

“Okay, Mr. Wiggles. Here’s what we’re gonna do…” Eda said.

* * *

Luz and Willow had almost reached the school entrance when the archway in front of them was magically blocked. Whipping around, they gasped as

they saw Principal Bump moving toward them in the hallway, leading an entire horde of abominations!

The duo ducked behind a pillar. “Oh, this is awful. I don’t know what to do,” Willow said. “Amity’s right. I’m just Half-a-Witch Willow.”

“You’re *Full*-Witch Willow, and you’re great!” Luz said. “And someone once told me great witches are *resourceful*.”

Then Luz reached into her pocket and pulled out a handful of stuff. There was some string, a marble, a bandage, a coin, and the strange rock she had pulled from the trash heap.

“That’s it!” Willow said excitedly, grabbing the rock.

“You mean that greasy slime ball?”

“Luz, it’s a seed!” Willow said. “Thank goodness you had it on you!”

“Yeah,” Luz said, realizing that maybe there was something special to Eda’s teachings. “Thank goodness someone told me to hold on to it.”

As Principal Bump and the abomination squad lumbered closer, Willow placed the seed in her lap and raised her arms to the ceiling.

"Please…grow!" she intoned.

All at once, vines exploded from the seed into the air and throughout the school. They went everywhere, and some of them entangled the principal and entrapped the abominations.

For a moment, there was silence. No one said a word.

Then the silence was broken by Principal Bump, who shouted, "Remarkable!"

The magic blocking the archway in front of them disappeared, and the girls saw that the vines had pushed open the front doors. They could now escape.

“There’s the exit!” Luz said.

But before the girls could leave, someone shouted, “Not so fast!”

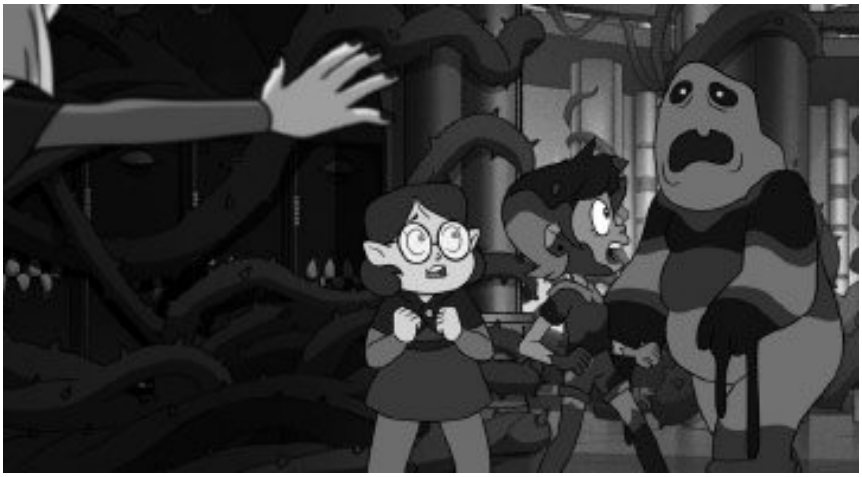
It was Amity.

“I’m not letting you get away so easily,” Amity said. “I. Want. My. Badge!”

Amity reached out, her eyes gleaming with anger. “Abominations… seize!”

Slowly, the abominations obeyed and began to push through the snaking vines toward Willow and Luz. Luz punched one abomination, then grabbed Willow and pulled her toward the doors.

An abomination blocked their path. Once again, Willow summoned some vines, stopping it.



“Get outta here!” Willow ordered Luz.

“No! I’m not leaving you!” Luz shouted.

“I may get detention,” Willow said, “but *you’ll* get dissected!”

The abominations managed to make their way through the vines. Willow yelled, “So go!” commanding another vine to grab Luz and take her to the doors.

“Willow!” Luz said as the doors closed behind her. “I can’t save you right now, but I know someone who can!”

* * *

Prince Jr. was a royal pain.

The creature was attacking Eda, spewing fire at her. Eda dodged the monster and smacked the thing again with her staff.

King stood on the awning of the Owl House. He was trying to get a big barrel in place.

Eda moved closer to the house, and the trash slug followed. “Pour the salt—now!” she ordered.

“Baby boy!” King said, his voice full of regret.

He and the trash slug looked at each other for a moment, and King thought that maybe, just maybe, he had reached the trash slug.

That is, until it lunged for him.

“I have no son!” King yelled. “Eat salt!”

With those words, King pushed the barrel over, dumping salt into the creature’s mouth. In no time at all, the trash slug was shrinking, and soon it was once again just a tiny little thing.

“Yes! I did it!” King hollered from the awning. “I’m amazing!”

He was so amazing, in fact, that his celebrating caused him to fall. Smiling, Eda caught him.

“Haha, you helped, too!” King said. “You *are* a good teacher.”

Eda’s smile quickly went away. “I wish Luz thought that, too.”

“Edaaaaaaaaaa!”

Luz appeared, ran to Eda, and went in for a big hug.

“Hey, hey, hey,” Eda said. “What is this? I never understand when you do this.”

“Your lesson worked!” Luz said, talking really fast. “Keeping junk in my pocket saved my life! But wait—my new friends, they’re in danger!”

Eda was looking at Luz, trying to figure out what she meant, when suddenly Willow and Gus ran up, too. They both hugged Luz.

“Seriously, what is that?” Eda asked.

“You won’t believe it, Luz!” Willow said. “Everything is perfect now!”

“It’s true! I don’t believe it!” Luz said.

Willow told her that Principal Bump was so impressed by her plant work he was switching her to the Plant Magic track! Willow snapped her fingers, and her school uniform magically changed to green.

“Yes!” Luz shouted.

The girls were hugging and twirling when Luz asked, “What about Amity?”

“Last we saw, she was asking Bump if today could count as extra credit,” Gus replied.

Luz smiled at her friends. “Well, I can’t wait to see you in action next time I sneak in!”

“About that…” Gus said. “You’re kinda, sorta…”

Gus pulled out what looked like a wanted poster featuring Luz—or rather Luz in her abomination disguise.

“Banned!” Gus finished.

“That’s my girl!” Eda said proudly.

Willow excitedly told Luz that they would come to the Owl House and teach her what they learned.

“Aw, that would be nice,” Luz said. “But I have a pretty great teacher already.” She smiled at Eda, who couldn’t believe what Luz had just said.

Eda smiled back at Luz. “Yeah, that’s right! Luz is *my* student. Back off, academy twerps!”

Then Eda looked at the wanted poster and appeared to get a little misty-eyed. “Baby’s first wanted poster. Good job, kid,” she said, patting Luz on the head. “Looks like I taught you something after all.”

OH, YOU'RE STILL HERE! I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE GONE HOME BY NOW.

SINCE YOU SEEM TO HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO, YOU MIGHT AS WELL TURN THE PAGE AND LEARN SOME MORE ABOUT ME AND LUZ!

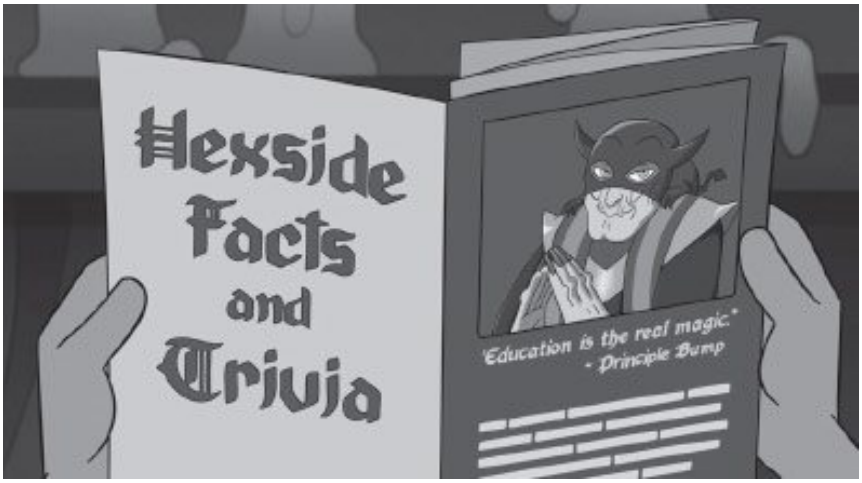
SEEMS LIKE I SHOULD PROBABLY MENTION THAT LUZ IS GOING TO ATTEND THAT HEXSIDE SCHOOL PLACE, AND, OH YEAH, LUZ AND AMITY ARE

KINDA, SORTA FRIENDS.

NOW SERIOUSLY, LEAVE ME ALONE! MY SNACKS AREN'T GONNA EAT THEMSELVES.

CHAPTER 7

LUZ LOUNGED ON a couch in the living room of the Owl House. She was reading a HEXSIDE FACTS AND TRIVIA pamphlet and scratching King's back while he slept.



"King, listen to this!" Luz said.

King stirred from his slumber and gave Luz an annoyed look, because her scratching had slowed down. "Less read-y, more scratch-y!" he said.

"Sorry," Luz said. "Now that I'll be a student at Hexside, I want to learn all about it. I've got a new crush, and her name is Education!"

Eda poked her head through the doorway and said, “Hey, freeloaders! Guess what today is!”

“Is it your birthday?” Luz asked.

“Is it *myyyyy* birthday?” King suggested.

“It’s *my* birthday!” Hooty said.

“No!” Eda said with excitement. “It’s Human Treasure Day!” She showed off what looked like a suitcase.

Then the suitcase unfolded into a door, and a garbage bag fell out of it and disintegrated, revealing a pile of trash.

“Ahhh, fresh garbage!” Eda said proudly.

“Oh, gimme, gimme, gimme!” King said as he ran to the garbage pile. He dug right in and grabbed a stuffed teddy bear. “Yes! Another worthy addition to my army of *terror*!”

He pulled a string coming out of its back until it wouldn’t give any more, and let go. The teddy bear said, “I love cuddles and kisses!”

“Truly horrifying!” King said.

King and Eda began to sort through the garbage pile full of treasures from the human world. But Luz didn’t so much as move from the couch. She was still engrossed in the school pamphlet.

“Yo, kid,” Eda said, “your trash pile’s getting cold. While *mine’s* getting hot!”

Eda dug through the pile and pulled out a wire coat hanger. “I’ve never seen such an extravagant earring!” she marveled.

But Luz wasn’t paying attention. “You can have my trash,” she said. “Did you know that Hexside was built on the bones of its rival school? One it *literally* conquered?”

She held out the pamphlet to show a picture of Hexside students standing atop their defeated rivals.

Eda didn’t bother to look at it. She was gazing at her reflection in a handheld mirror, with coat hangers dangling from her ears. “Yes, I know all these things,” Eda said. “I went there. It was the most harrowing period of my life.”

“Can you imagine it?” Luz continued. “Me, in the halls of Hexside, studying with Willow and Gus and…maybe even Amity!”

As soon as she said the name, something clicked inside Luz. “Amity! We’re supposed to meet so I can get my Azura book back!” Luz said, jumping up from the couch and running out the front door.

A moment later, she opened the door and stuck her head in. “I love you guys!” she said.

“And I love you, Luz,” Hooty replied as Luz slammed the door again.

“Eh, who needs her?” Eda said.

“Yeah! This bear can be our new Luz!” King suggested.

He pulled the teddy bear’s pull string, and the stuffed animal spoke once more: “Being without you is just un-*bear*-able!”

"*You're* unbearable!" King said, slamming the teddy bear to the floor.

* * *

Luz sprinted through the marketplace, heading for the town square, where Amity was waiting for her.

"Hey, Amity!" Luz called out. "Luz is finally here!"

But before she could reach the square, her path was blocked by a couple of older teens.

“Hi, Luz!” the teens said in unison.

Surprised, Luz fell down.

“Edric! Emira!” Amity shouted. “Stop bothering her! Sorry, Luz. They insisted on coming for some reason.”

Amity reached down to help Luz get up.

“Because we wuv you, baby sister!” Emira said.

Amity pushed Emira away.

“In any case, here’s your book,” Amity said, passing the Azura book to an eager Luz.

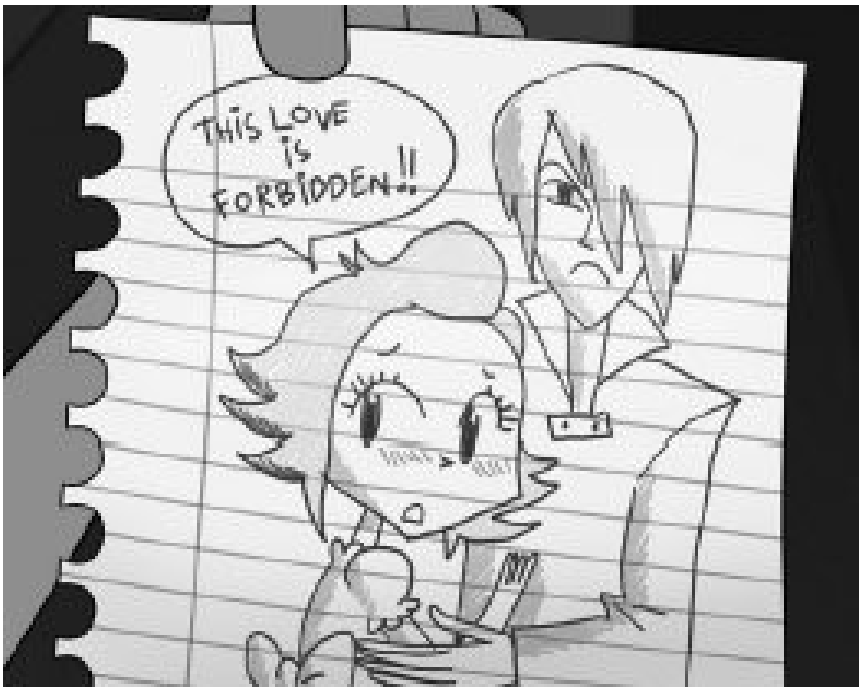
“Soooooo, what’d you think?” Luz asked.

“It was fine,” Amity replied coolly.

Luz opened the book and saw a page of loose-leaf paper inside. On it was a drawing of what looked like Amity with one of the characters from

the Azura book. “So fine you drew yourself with Malingale, the mysterious soothsayer?”

Embarrassed, Amity held up a finger, and the piece of paper disintegrated.



Luz was excited that Amity had liked the book, and she suggested that maybe they could even start an Azura club at school when they were classmates.

Amity looked at Luz and raised an eyebrow. “When we’re *what*?”

Luz grinned broadly. “Surprise! I’m enrolling at Hexside!”

“Oh, sorry,” Amity said, “but to be in my class, you need to take a placement exam and prove that you’ve mastered two spells.”

Amity took Luz's school pamphlet and showed her a page that said, in big, bold letters, *Advanced Requirements: 2 Spell Minimum.*

"Placement exam?" Luz said, surprised. "Spells?"
"Quit giving her a hard time, Mittens," Emira said, looking at Amity.
"Yeah, of *course* she knows two spells," Edric said. "Right, Luz?"

“Pfffff, yeah, of *course* I know two spells,” Luz said, and then she let out a nervous laugh that seemed to say, *I do* not *know two spells*.

“Because if you don’t, they’ll put you in the baby class,” Amity said.

Luz gulped.

Suddenly, Edric perked up. “Oooh, brain idea!” he said.

“What if we all trained together?” Emira suggested. “We could show off what we know!”

“Whaddya say, Luz?” Edric said.

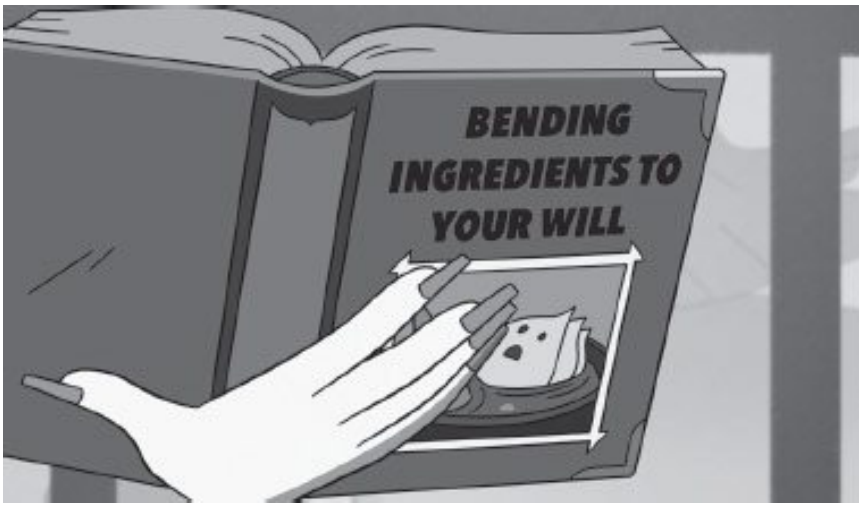
Luz didn’t know how to respond, so she said, “Uh, actually, I have other training plans. In a very faraway place. That I have to go to right

now. Bye!”

She ran away from the market, leaving Amity, Emira, and Edric behind.

CHAPTER 8

EDA WAS IN the kitchen, standing in front of a bubbling cauldron. Next to her were a pile of vegetables and a cookbook entitled *Bending Ingredients to Your Will*.



"Eda!" Luz said as she darted into the kitchen. "Eda, Eda, Eda, you have to teach me a new spell right now!"

"Sorry, Luz," Eda said, not looking up. "These vegetables won't cook themselves—yet…."

The witch turned to her ingredients and picked up a potion. She poured the greenish-blue liquid on the vegetables. They began to vibrate, and soon little limbs sprouted from them.

“All right, everybody in the pot,” Eda said.

In response, the vegetables screamed and ran off.

“Why do I always think that’s going to work?” Eda said with a frown.

“But I need to know *two* spells to get into decent classes at Hexside!” Luz said. “I can make light glyphs. But at the end of the day, that’s the only spell I know!”

Putting her hands on her hips, Eda looked at Luz. “And whose fault is *that*?” Eda asked.

“Yours!” Luz answered.

Eda considered that, then laughed. “Yup! Got me there.”

“Just teach me a spell now!” Luz begged. “*Any* spell. It can be…*the darkest evil*.”

“Well, I *have* been researching my texts on wild magic,” Eda said. “But I’m much too busy right now.”

She closed the cookbook and tossed it into the cauldron.

“C’mon, Eda! You’re the most powerful witch on the Boiling Isles!” Luz implored. “How would it look if your apprentice got thrown into the *baby* class?”

“Weaponizing my pride,” Eda said, stroking her chin. “Well, in that case, this looks like a job for magic boot camp!”

The kitchen door flew open, revealing King, holding his teddy bear. “Did someone say ‘boot camp’? I agree to run it!” King offered. “We’ll rise at dawn! You’ll carry me on your back as I yell hateful things about your performance!”

Eda told King that he couldn’t be a part of the boot camp. She didn’t want Luz to lose focus and go all weird when King did something adorable.

“I am *not* adorable,” King protested, clutching his teddy bear while stamping his foot on the kitchen floor.

Luz gasped and, in a cutesy voice, said, “Aw, he stamped his wittle foot!”

King screeched as he threw his hands in the air and left the kitchen, slamming the door behind him.

Eda told Luz that they were going to go somewhere special to learn—a place where magical energy just flowed. “You’ll have to follow my teachings exactly,” Eda said.

“Yes!” Luz shouted.

* * *

Eda took Luz to a place called the Knee. It was bitterly cold, and the ground was covered in snow.

Walking next to Eda and wearing a heavy parka, Luz looked around at the changing landscape as they advanced along a winding snow-covered trail. Eda headed up a hill, and Luz followed. When they finally reached the top, Luz saw them: the crumbled remains of the Knee.

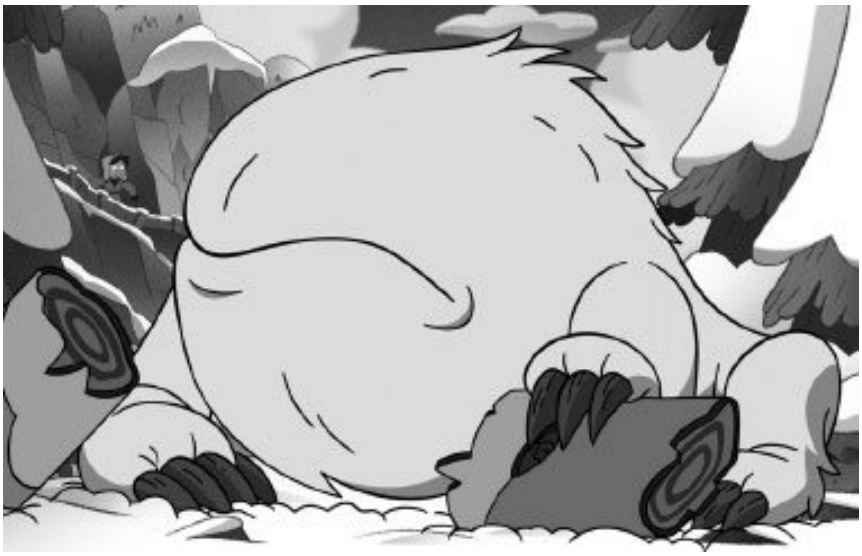
“The earliest witches came to the Knee to develop their magic, drawn to its natural power,” Eda explained.

“It’s beautiful,” Luz said, taking in the ancient ruins of centuries-old buildings.

“Though it’s not without its dangers,” Eda quickly added.

Eda tilted her head at something nearby. Luz swiveled and saw a huge furry creature.

“The Slitherbeast. Don’t worry: if you don’t mess with him, he won’t mess with you,” Eda said nonchalantly.



Then Eda walked right past the Slitherbeast. As a test, Luz walked past the creature, sticking out her tongue. The Slitherbeast looked up, and Luz hurried, following Eda. The two approached the ruins, heading upward until they had made it to the top of the Knee.

“Here’s where we’ll set up shop!” Eda said.

With a grin, Luz said, “I’ll definitely learn my second spell here! Gorgeous views, magic in the air! And best of all, we’re completely alone!”

“Watch out!” Eda warned as a burst of magical energy headed their way. Eda just managed to tackle Luz to the ground behind some ruins. Then the witch looked over them and held out her staff, as if ready for combat.

“Sorry, whoever’s over there!” came a voice.

Luz recognized it immediately. It was Amity! Luz peeked over the ruins and saw Amity with Emira and Edric.

“Forget teaching me a spell,” Luz gasped. “Just make me disappear.”

“Well, okay, but I’ve got a sixty–forty record of making you reappear,” Eda said. “Ohhh, you meant—Never mind.”

“Hey! Luz! Hey, it’s us!” Edric called out.

Looking at them over the ruins, Luz put on her best smile and said, “Heeeeeeey, guuuuuuys!”

Confused, Eda said, “Who are *they*?”

“Be cool. If they know I haven’t mastered two spells, they’ll think I belong in the baby class!” Luz said hurriedly.

Amity walked over to Luz and said, “What’s that about the baby class?”

“Only that it’s for babies, and Luz here clearly isn’t a baby,” Eda said. Then she turned to Luz, said, “Nailed it,” and walked away, whistling.

Chuckling nervously, Luz asked Amity what she and her siblings were doing there.

“I’m here to train,” Amity said. “I’m trying to beat Ed and Em’s highest score on the exam.”

“Mittens!” Emira said, walking up behind Amity. “That’s impossible!”

Edric faced Luz and gave Amity some serious side-eye. “She still needs to use a training wand to learn new spells,” he said.

“So what are you working on?” Edric asked Luz. “Something powerful?”

“Yep, powerful spells,” she said nervously. “I’m working on one that’s *so* crazy! Eda’s a pretty incredible teacher.”

A moment later, Eda reappeared, carrying a basket full of snowballs. “Luz! I shall now teach you how to identify different types of snow—by taste!”

Then she took a snowball from the basket and held it up in front of Luz. “Go on. Eat the snow.”

She pushed the snowball right into Luz’s face.

“Is this some kind of special magic?” Emira asked.

Amity cleared her throat. “I don’t think the owl lady wants to show us any of her powerful spells,” she said.

By then Eda had filled her own mouth with snowballs. She shivered, pointing at her cheeks. Then she swallowed and said, “Brain freeze! Brain freeze!”

Getting ready to leave, Emira said, “See ya ’round, human. Good luck with your, uh…training.”

Edric picked up some snow and tried to lick it. Before he could, Emira smacked the snow out of his hand and pulled him along.

Soon Amity and her siblings were out of sight.

“Eda! Can you *please* take this seriously?” Luz said.

“*You* need to take *me* seriously!” Eda said, raising her voice. “Go taste snow without my guidance, see where it gets you!”

Luz's shoulders slumped, and she stared at the ground.

Eda could see that Luz was frustrated, but she told her young apprentice not to worry. "If you listen to me, soon you'll be doing stuff like *that*!" she said.

The witch pointed across the way, where Amity was practicing with her training wand. She had a spell book open in front of her. Luz watched as Amity conjured a fireball that seared a nearby tree. The battery meter on the wand in Amity's hand went down a little.

“And it won’t be with some wack training wand,” Eda said. “It’ll be the real deal. But you have to trust me, okay?”

With a deep breath, Luz nodded. “Okay. I trust you.”

“We’ve covered snow,” Eda said, “so *now* it’s on to smelling moss.”

Eda shoved two bits of moss into her nostrils. “Now, the trick is ya really gotta get it up in there,” she said, her voice sounding all nasally.

Luz sighed.

CHAPTER 9

KING SAT ON the stoop outside the Owl House, holding on to his teddy bear. Francois, the stuffed bunny, was with him, too.

"This is ludicrous!" King moaned. "I once led armies! I can lead a dang boot camp! But I have no recruits!"

Suddenly, his eyes opened wide, and he looked at his stuffed animals. Standing up, he said, "Or do I?"

"Yep!" Hooty chimed in. "It's your faithful pal Hooty, reporting for duty! Up at dawn, takin' orders all day long!"

"Ugh, no," King replied. "You are *too* desperate."

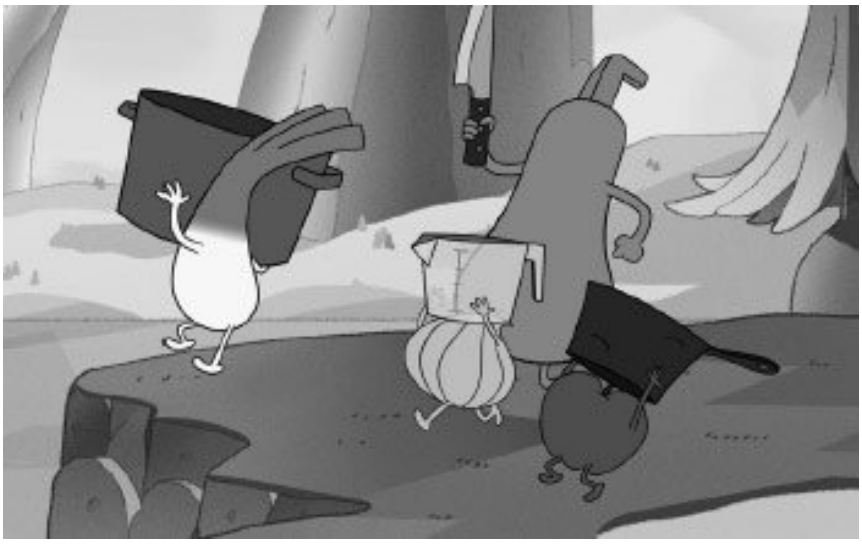
King ran into the Owl House. A few moments later, he returned, his arms full of stuffed animals. He took great care in putting them down, side by side.

"Roll call!" he shouted. "New guy! Aloysius Turtle! Chip! Beefy Bob! Francois…"

King looked at Francois and pulled him back from the group, giving him a hug. “You’re perfect already,” he said. “As for the rest of you, I’m only sayin’ this once, so listen up!”

Then King turned to face his new recruits, staring them in their blank stuffed-animal eyes. At once, all the energy seemed to fade from his small body. “Aw, it’s no fun if they don’t tremble,” King whined.

That was when he noticed a bunch of vegetables with little arms and legs run by, carrying some kitchen implements, which they tossed into the river.



“Ahh, okay, all right, yep, an idea’s happening,” King said.

* * *

The sun was setting as Luz’s training at the Knee continued. Eda, sipping from a cup of hot cocoa, sat at a magical campfire by a cozy-looking tent. Luz trudged through the snow, looking like she’d been hard at work all day.

Luz told Eda she’d identified the smells of three different rocks, sorted all the twigs from big to small, *and* found Eda’s glove…and hand. She pulled out the glove and hand from her jacket and gave them to Eda.

“I was *wondering* where that thing went!” Eda said.

“So what now?” Luz asked. She looked past Eda and saw Amity, Edric, and Emira. They were busy practicing, and by the looks of it, they were working on some pretty cool fighting maneuvers.

Amity waved just as Edric cast a spell to sink his little sister in the snow. Luz giggled and looked back at Eda.

“Hey,” Eda said. “I know my lessons seem weird, but this is what wild magic is all about—making a connection with nature! The earliest witches understood that. Human witches need to understand it, too. You want to learn a second spell?”

“With all my heart,” Luz answered.

“Then you have to learn from the Island,” Eda said.

The witch led Luz to a rock that jutted out, just outside their camp.

Eda sat Luz down on the rock. “Now, look,” she said. Luz blinked and saw the Island stretching out before her. It was a stunning sight, to be sure.

“And think about what the Island is trying to tell you,” Eda continued.

Then Eda walked back to the fire, leaving Luz to sit on the rock by herself.

After a deep breath, Luz said, “All right, Luz. Look! Look with everything you’ve got.”

Luz looked, and she looked some more. She looked so hard she thought her face muscles were going to give out.

“Focus!” Luz said.

She made a puppet with her right hand. “Focus? On what?” she made it say. “On how you’ll be stuck in the baby class?”

“No! Don’t think like that!” Luz exclaimed.

“Face it,” she replied with her left hand. “You’ll never get a second spell following Eda’s lessons.”

“Silence, hands!” Luz said.

Before she could continue her conversation with her hands, Luz heard a loud boom. She turned to see Amity in the distance, still holding her wand, with her spell book open. There was a scorched column in front of her, smoking from a recent fireball spell.

“Amity, dinner’s ready!” Emira said from their campfire.

Luz watched as Amity put her spell book and her training wand in the doorway of their tent and went to sit with her siblings.

“If I want to be in the same class as Amity, I’m gonna need to learn magic like Amity,” Luz said to herself.

“Great work, Luz,” she replied with her left hand.
“Shhh!” Luz said. “I don’t need your validation.”

* * *

The stuffed animals were now lined up on the kitchen counter, an impressive fluffy army. King glanced at an open cookbook and picked up a magic potion. It was the same magic potion Eda had used to bring the vegetables to life.

“Military discipline, cooking…I truly am a demon for all seasons!” King said. “Just a dash of Eda’s secret sauce and I’m the creator of life!”

He poured the greenish-blue potion on his stuffed animals and watched as they slowly stirred.

“Yes, yes, yes!” King shouted. “My loyal recruits! Welcome to boot camp! You sure need it! Look at you! Raggedy, pathetic, chewed on. You’ve got a button hanging off of your eye. Pathetic! But I will mold you worms into…slightly better kinds of worms!”

King paused for a moment, glaring at the stuffed animals. Then he continued. “Your first mission: gimme snacks! Your commander is hungry, so pick it up!”

The toys shuffled off in search of snacks, and King noticed that the teddy bear was going not toward the kitchen but the other way.

“Hey, Private Ding-dong!” King called out. “Snacks are thataway.”

As the teddy bear switched directions and walked away from him, King told the recruit that he had better shape up now that he was in King’s boot camp. The teddy bear’s eyes flashed red.

* * *

Amity and her siblings had walked away from their camp, so Luz was able to sneak past them. She made it to the opening of their tent, then paused.

Working up her courage, Luz opened the curtain and took the training wand and the spell book.

She found a quiet spot to look at Amity's book. Excited, Luz turned to a page that contained instructions to create a fireball, complete with all the magical motions she needed to make with the training wand.

Luz couldn't wait to try the spell, so she picked up the wand and pointed it away from her. She did her best to copy the movements, creating

a spell circle. A moment later, a small fireball shot out from the wand, and Luz filled with pride.

“I did magic! I did magic!” she said. “Without drawing anything! This thing is the coolest!”

Luz was ready to try again when she heard someone say, “Hold it right there!”

She turned around to see Eda standing there. “What are you doing with *that*?” Eda demanded.

Luz grasped the training wand tightly. “I’m doing magic! What would *you* have me do? Eat more snow? Lick a rock?”

“Okay, so maybe my methods are unique,” Eda said. “But so is your magic. Connecting to the Island can help you. That wand *can’t*.”

“Well, it’s already helped me!” Luz said, sounding hurt. “Just watch what I can do!”

Her temper rising, Luz pointed the wand and made the same motions to summon another fireball. The wand shook as a fireball formed at its tip and grew larger. However, Luz didn’t notice that the wand’s battery meter went down.

Eda managed to duck as the fireball shot through the forest. There was a distant boom.

Then came a loud roar.

Then came a rumbling and the sound of something crashing through trees as the forest birds fled.

The Slitherbeast flew through the sky and landed right in front of Eda. He greeted the witch with a loud and scary roar.

“You’ve angered the Slitherbeast,” Eda stated flatly.

CHAPTER 10

THE HULKING SLITHERBEAST, with its fur singed from the fireball, stalked around their camp, and Eda frowned.

"You've angered the Slitherbeast!" she said again.

"Will it accept a heartfelt apology?" Luz wondered.

The creature snarled and glared at Luz. It saw that she was holding the still-smoking training wand in her hand. The monster reached out for Luz, but Eda knocked the young girl out of harm's way.

The Slitherbeast grabbed Eda in its huge hand. Seconds later, Amity and her siblings ran up the hill. Amity saw that Luz was holding her

training wand and demanded to know what she was doing with it. Luz sputtered, words failing her. Amity grabbed her wand and spell book from Luz.

“Mittens, we’ve got bigger problems,” Emira pointed out as the Slitherbeast moved toward the kids. The monster was still clutching Eda in one of its giant hands.

“Aw, he’s so cute!” Emira said.

Edric and Emira formed spell circles, and cords of shimmering light appeared. Like lassos, the light whipped around the Slitherbeast’s front paws, and the creature fell to the ground. The siblings pulled on the glowing cords, holding down the monster. But the Slitherbeast was so strong that it began to rise from the snow.

“You got it, now finish it off!” Eda said.

“I’m on it!” Amity hollered. She tried to shoot a fireball from her training wand, but it only fizzled. Looking down at the wand, Amity saw that the battery had run out completely.

“Did you use this all up?” Amity said in disbelief.

“I…I didn’t know!” Luz said sheepishly.

Emira and Edric called for Luz to do one of the powerful spells she had been talking about. Luz had to admit she didn’t actually know any.

The Slitherbeast picked itself up from the ground and yanked on its magical bonds. Edric and Emira fell to the ground, and the monster reached down and picked up the siblings in its other hand. Then the creature whirled around and headed back down the hill with its prey, leaving Luz and Amity behind.

* * *

King was relaxing on the couch in the comfort of the Owl House living room, surrounded by snacks and sitting next to his nonliving stuffed bunny, Francois. The toys King had animated were bringing more snacks into the living room and setting them down on the couch.

“Yep, keep ’em comin’!” King said as one of the toys dropped off a bag of chips. “And don’t forget the pretzels this time.”

King dumped a pile of chips on top of Francois. After all, running a boot camp was tough work, and as his second-in-command, Francois deserved it!

The teddy bear had wandered into the living room and saw the chips atop Francois. It reached down to take some snacks for itself.

“Hey, hey!” King chided. “Private New Guy! You are not privy to snacking privileges! Back away!”

The teddy bear jumped off the couch, and King went back to eating. Once again, he failed to notice the teddy bear’s eyes glowing red as the toy stormed off.

“Leading this boot camp has tuckered the little guy out,” King said with a yawn. “So Sergeant King, signing off!”

Settling himself down for a nap, King closed his eyes. He sensed that he was being watched, and when he opened his eyes, he saw the teddy bear standing over him. Staring at him. With red eyes.

“Excuse me! Could you maybe turn down those eyeballs?” King ordered. “I’m trying to sleep!”

Then the other animated stuffed animals appeared and stood over King.

Now their eyes were red, too.

King shivered as one of the stuffed animals pulled the teddy bear’s string.

“Don’t you want a hug?” the teddy bear said menacingly.

* * *

“What do we do?” Luz said as they watched the trees shake in the Slitherbeast’s path after it had run off with Amity’s siblings and Eda.

“*I* am going after them,” Amity said, determined. “*You* are staying here.”

“But the beast has Eda!”

“And because of *you*, it also has my brother and sister!” Amity retorted. “Now stay put! You’ll only get hurt.”

Then, without her training wand, Amity cast a spell. She conjured a glowing magenta barrier, entrapping Luz. The barrier was hot, and Luz pulled back after she tried to clutch its walls. “Amity! Wait!” she called, but she could only watch helplessly as Amity ran off.

Not knowing what else to do, Luz kicked a big rock inside the barrier. “Agh, stupid island.”

Resigned to her fate, Luz sat down on the rock. She looked out and saw the snow falling. Despite the circumstances, the scenery was beautiful.

“You were supposed to teach me magic,” Luz said sadly. “But I’ll never learn more than this.” Luz pulled out a pad of paper and drew a light glyph with a pencil. A ball of light rose from the page and hovered above it. Luz watched as it continued to rise into the sky. It looked almost like a star, she thought, and then, at last, it disappeared. But she kept on watching, observing the other stars in the sky. She noticed that a group of them seemed to form a pattern.

“Wait,” she said, squinting. “Is that…a light glyph?”

She traced the stars with her finger, and immediately, she recognized the shape.

“But what does that mean?” she wondered.

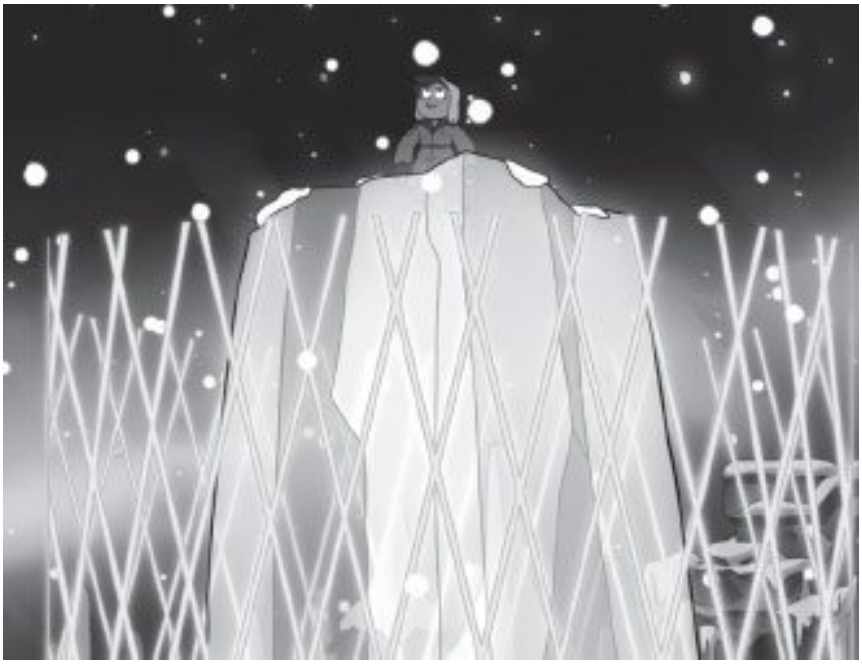
Several large snowflakes fell into Luz’s hand at that moment and melted. Before they melted, Luz noticed a different glyph in their pattern.

“Whoa,” she said, her eyes widening.

She picked up a stick, knelt down, and let more snowflakes land on her hand. As she used the stick to draw in the snow an exact duplicate of the glyph she saw, she said, “It means…magic is a gift from the Island. It means…” She activated the glyph, and a column of ice formed. “Magic is everywhere.”

Luz turned toward the magenta barrier and leaped up from the ground. On the snow inside the barrier, she drew a larger version of the glyph. Then she stepped onto the rock and shouted, “Magic is everywhere!”

She jumped off the rock and landed hard on the glyph. An enormous column of ice sprang from the ground beneath her feet, forcing Luz into the air along with it. She went right over the barrier and landed in a snowdrift.



Raising her arms in victory, she shouted, “My second spell! Thank you, snow! Thank you, Island! Thank you, Eda….”

The thought of her mentor was all the reminder Luz needed. Eda was still in danger, along with Edric and Emira.

And Amity.

Luz raced down the path in pursuit of the Slitherbeast.

* * *

“Hey! How dare you mutiny!” King said, trying to regain control of the situation. “Unhand your commander right now!”

The stuffed animals tossed him out the window. “I gave you life; I can take it away!” King shouted. The stuffed animals threw arrows and knives after him.

“Hooty! Hooty!” he called. “Great news, buddy! You can be in the boot camp! First task: destroy the boot camp!”

Hooty considered it for a moment, then said, “No, thanks!”

“Wh-what?” King stuttered. “But you begged to join!”

“Sorry,” Hooty replied. “You said I was desperate! So now I’m playing hard to get!”

King couldn’t believe it. Rolling his eyes, he said, “What do you want?”

“I dunno,” Hooty said thoughtfully. “What are you offering?”

King thought for a second and pulled out a piece of chalk. Then he scribbled on the front door, making the outline of a body for Hooty.

“Wow!” Hooty said happily. “This is incredible! It’s so real! You’ve got yourself a deal!”

Suddenly, the door opened, and Hooty craned his long neck inside the house.

King watched with glee as stuffing from the assembled toys was spilled.

“This day shall live in infamy,” he said.

CHAPTER 11

LUZ HAD MANAGED to track the Slitherbeast all the way to its lair, inside a cave on the hillside. She watched from afar as the creature spat some kind of purple goo on a cave wall and placed Eda, Edric, and Emira on it, then turned its attention away from its prey. The three were now stuck to the wall, staring at each other.

"Don't worry," Emira said. "We'll be fine."

Suddenly, a bunch of goo-covered skeletons fell to the ground and slid away down the snowy cave floor.

"Nope, we're gonna die," Edric observed.

Luz had carefully found her way to a crack in a cave wall and snuck inside. "That's right. Death is here!" she said in a menacing voice, hiding behind a big skull. "Just kidding. Luz is here!" she added, pulling up the skull to reveal herself.

“Kid, get outta here!” Eda said. “I’m just gonna sneak away when the thing starts eating the twins!” she added in a low voice.

“Wait, what?” Emira said as Edric gasped.

“Don’t worry, Eda,” Luz said. “I get it now. I was so obsessed with learning my second spell I didn’t listen to you. But now I’m gonna save you!”

Then Luz raced off, chanting, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!”

Eda sighed. “Well, at least I got to see her misplaced confidence one last time.”

* * *

Luz ran into Amity inside the cave.

“How did you get past the barrier?” Amity asked, confused.

“Magic! Literally! Now forget that, because you and I have to work together if we want to save everyone. Okay, here’s what we’re going to do….” She whispered something into Amity’s ear.

Meanwhile, the Slitherbeast returned. It sprinkled seasonings on its victims. The creature was hungry.

“Hey, ya big idiot!” Luz shouted. “Over here!”

The monster turned sharply and saw Luz waving her arms wildly in the distance. Behind the monster, Amity crept slowly toward Eda and her siblings.

“Amity!” Edric said.

“Use that fire spell we taught you!” Emira urged.

“But I can’t do it without the wand!” Amity said, frowning.

“Yes, you can,” Emira said encouragingly. “Just focus!”

“Okay,” Amity said, summoning her courage. She cleared her mind, then traced out a spell circle. Fire rose from her hands. It was the same kind she used for her fireball spell.

“Cool,” Emira said. “I didn’t actually think you could do it.”

Amity used the fire to melt the sticky goo off her siblings and Eda. They quickly fell to the ground.

But behind them, the Slitherbeast, still hungry, was chasing Luz. She ran outside, fleeing the cave. Stopping in front of a tree, Luz waited as the Slitherbeast let out a monstrous roar. It reared up on its hind legs, ready to attack.

Unfortunately for the Slitherbeast, it wasn't aware that it had run right onto a glyph drawn into the snow. Luz stomped on the glyph, and a column of ice shot from the ground, sending the Slitherbeast flying. The creature soared through the air and landed on its back, seemingly unable to get up.

Edric, Emira, Eda, and Amity came out of the cave at that moment, as the Slitherbeast somehow managed to get back on its feet. It was once again poised to pounce.

"Want me to teach you kids something cool?" Eda asked.

"Yes!" the group shouted.

Eda stood in front of the cave as the creature jumped right at her. Then she yelled, "Sleep spell!" and drew a spell circle. A blast of magic hit the Slitherbeast, and it fell to the ground, snoring loudly.

Everyone was duly impressed.

"Now *that's* my mentor!" Luz called out, and she ran up to Eda excitedly. "Did you see? I learned my second spell! I made the connection!"

"I saw," Eda said. "Nice work, kiddo."

"You showed some real bravery in there, Sis," Emira said to her younger sister.

“Yeah, nice work, kiddo!” Edric added.

Smiling, Amity walked over to Luz. “So it looks like we’ll be in the same class.”

“Azura book club? Azura book club?” Luz babbled excitedly.

Amity looked a little embarrassed. “As long as it’s a *secret* club, okay?”

“It’s not a secret!” Edric announced.

“We’re gonna tell everyone,” Emira said.

Suddenly, Eda sneezed. “All right, your adorable banter is *literally* making me sick. Let’s go home already.”

“On it, teach!” Luz said. She quickly drew a large ice glyph around her and Eda and slammed her hand down on it. An ice column arose from the ground, launching Luz and Eda into the air.

Emira watched the spectacle and turned to her siblings. “I think we can go the normal way,” she said.

* * *

King scanned the living room. It looked like a battlefield, and indeed, it was. Stuffing from the toys was everywhere. And there was the teddy bear’s head, separated from its big fluffy body.

“Private Hooty,” King said, “today, when the felt flew, you showed grit and determination that were instrumental in securing our victory. May I just say it has been an honor to be your commander.”

“Sir, the honor is all mine,” Hooty replied.

Victorious in battle, the two hugged each other.

“Private, our hearts have been touched by fire. And—”

But before King could finish, he was interrupted by the arrival of Eda and Luz.

Eda frowned at the incredible mess that was her living room. “*Ahem.* What the *heck* did you two get into?” she asked.

“Um, excuse me, we’re having a moment here!” King said, sounding annoyed.

“You’ll never understand what we’ve been through together!” Hooty exclaimed. “Never! *Never!*”

“Ugh, moment ruined,” King said, and walked off.

“I will be haunted by my actions forever,” Hooty said. “Hoot hoot!”

PRETTY HEX-CELLENT TALES, HUH? BET I LEFT YOU THIRSTING FOR MORE!